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THREE TRIPS TO THE TROPICS

Or,

The West Indies in Winter,

1903, 1904, 1905.

By

Marcus L. Taft.

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A Winter Tour to the West Indies.*

THE bright, cold, blustery morning of January 10, 1903, saw that mighty leviathan of the deep, the German steamship, "Moltke," slowly back out of her slip at Hoboken, and, stately gliding down the Hudson, start on the cruise toward the tropics. The substantial sky-scrapers of Manhattan Island, the fort and barracks on Governor's Island, and the Statue of Liberty were soon left behind. Running successfully the gauntlet of Forts Lafayette and Wadsworth, the steamer passed by the high bluffs of Staten Island, with its beautiful residences, and the low, sandy beach of Coney Island, with its mammoth hotels, high towers, and other attractions.

Storm-tossed Atlantic liners, whose bulwarks and funnels, roughly marked with spray and ice, betrayed their fierce tussle with the North Atlantic in winter, were gladly coming into port. Their occupants, doubtless, viewed with mingled feelings the "Moltke", as she majestically and steadily steamed outward and southward upon the open sea. Some may have felt, like Samuel Johnson, that "being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chances of being drowned." But our party felt otherwise, exulting:

"The sea! The sea! The open sea!
The blue, the fresh, the ever free!
I'm on the sea! I'm on the sea!
I am, where I would ever be,
With the blue above and the blue below,
And silence, whereso'er I go.
I never was on the dull, tame shore,
But I loved the great sea more and more."

Perhaps,—to be frank,—one reason, why the ocean-voyage was personally so delightful, was that my brother and I, travelling together, tried to be mutually helpful. Fortunately for me, seasickness fell to his lot, thus leaving me entirely free from this nauseating annoyance.

This colossal steamer, "Moltke", although not a swift "ocean greyhound," is a triumph of modern naval architecture.

Read before the Rural Art Society of Clinton, N. Y.

She is equipped with quadruple expansion engines, is provided with a bilge-keel, which keeps her remarkably steady, and has electric lights and fans in her social halls, dining saloons, barber shop, and staterooms. Moreover, as a most useful novelty on shipboard, she is provided with a gymnasium, modeled on the Swedish method. This is in a special room on the upper deck. Here is an apparatus for horseback exercises, with an ordinary saddle for men and a side-saddle for women. Since all the apparatus is operated by electricity, one has simply to turn on the electric current, when, presto! the trotting, cantering or galloping begins, according as the crank is regulated. Another apparatus, called "The Camel", is also for riding. It has a very broad saddle and gives the rider a variety of jerky, sidewise motions. The "Vibrator" consists of a bright, metallic ball, ingeniously contrived so as to revolve in a sort of metallic cup, and it is applied by the attendant to different parts of the body. This novel gymnasium contains various other mechanisms of peculiar devices, either for friction, massage or vibration, while the gymnast (or, rather, "patient") remains passive in using these health-giving machines.

An elegantly furnished grill-room is a boon to all who, having sensitive stomachs, may not always care to risk sitting down to a regular "table d'hote", with its fashionable but tedious routine of course after course. This grill-room is also patronized by any who may desire, at irregular hours, toothsome, hot steak or chops, fresh from the grill.

Leaning upon the front rail under the captain's bridge, as this immense German steamship of 12,000 tons and 8,000 horse power steamed out of the fine harbor of America's foremost city, we entered into conversation with a fellow American, as to why the United States did not produce such steamers as this fine product of a German shipyard. The New York and Porto Rico Steamship Company is an American line, but, until recently, it has had only two steamers, the "Ponce" and "San Juan", each of 3,500 tons, while their newest steamer, the "Coamo," is of 5,000 tons. The mammoth "Moltke" is of 12,000 tons, or considerably larger than twice the size of the "Coamo," the latest addition to the New York and Porto Rico line. We Americans could not help feeling somewhat humiliated to be obliged to sail under the German flag, if we

desired to avail ourselves of the advantages possessed by this fine, big specimen of modern naval art. Perhaps some day Congress will wake up to the necessity of helping American shipping, both naval and mercantile.

The Germans are a very genial race. After the formalities are once over, one begins to feel the genuineness of their hospitality. A real heartiness of welcome is manifest in their treatment—a making one's self at home—*Gemuethlichkeit*, which is as refreshing as it is admirable. One day, our good-natured, portly captain presented each tourist, who was on the promenade deck, with a tasteful, ornamental button, personally going around and pinning one to each voyager, whether they were standing, or reclining on steamer chairs. One lady, who was peacefully sleeping in her chair, was somewhat startled, on awakening suddenly, to see the sturdy Teuton bending over her. Soon perceiving his benevolent intention, she resumed her usual composure, politely thanked the captain for the decoration, and soon was sweetly dozing away as before.

One afternoon, our attention was directed to great brown masses of floating seaweed, such as inspired that intrepid navigator, Columbus, with fresh hope on his first voyage over these same waters.

Early Sunday morning, while we were still slumbering, although our watches indicated 7 o'clock, it was a most pleasant sensation to be awakened by sweet strains of sacred music, played by a skilled band. We recognized "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul", and "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

The Germans afloat, as well as in their fatherland, display their national fondness for music. Twice daily we are favored with concerts, every morning at 10 and every evening at 9. Besides this, appropriate national airs are played by the band, as we enter the different ports.

Flying fish became more numerous as we approached the islands, while schools of porpoises were sporting over and through the waves of the sea. Opera glasses, field glasses and telescopes were leveled at one of the gunboats from the "White Squadron" under the command of Dewey. As we passed by Culebra, the headquarters of the recent naval maneuvers, we could distinctly see several men-of-war lying at anchor in its sheltered bay.

On our first day out, the sea was smooth, but the air was bitter cold. When we arrived at the beautiful harbor of St. Thomas, the bulletin announced, that the thermometer in New York was five degrees below zero. Twenty-four hours or so after leaving New York, we were sailing in the mild waters of the Gulf Stream. Before long, winter clothing became oppressive. A day or two before casting anchor at St. Thomas, the thermometer registered from 79 to 84 degrees, Fahrenheit, in the shade, with doors, windows and portholes all wide open, and electric fans buzzing at their greatest rapidity.

After a delightfully restful voyage of four days, away from the frigid north, the "Moltke" steamed into the famous, picturesque harbor of the mountainous island of St. Thomas, anchoring in the center of the harbor within full view of its only town, Charlotte Amelia. This settlement is charmingly built upon three hills, with high, verdure-clad mountains stretching far away in the background. Two of these hills are crowned by castles, one called "Bluebeard's Castle", and the other "Blackbeard's Castle", formerly the abode of buccaneers, who ravaged the coasts of the Spanish main on their piratical excursions. Those tourists who clambered, as we did, to the top of "Bluebeard's Castle", were amply repaid for their exertions by the entrancing, extensive view of the surrounding country, with its pomegranates, palm and orange trees, cacti, banana groves and sugar plantations. Still it was only by enforced mental effort, that one could really believe that, while we were in the midst of all this luxuriant, tropical vegetation with midsummer weather, midwinter blasts, with snow and cold, raged in New York, only four days away.

Our attention was directed to a rectangular, whitened slope near the base of a mountain. The soil had been scraped off and the place had been specially prepared with whitewash, so that rainwater could be collected to be distilled for drinking purposes. This same method of collecting water is in vogue at Aden, Arabia, and in the Bermudas, and other places, where springs or wells are unavailable.

These Danish islands have a peculiar fascination for the student of history. Hither came the noble-hearted Count Zinzendorf to investigate the conditions of the early persecuted Moravian missionaries and the oppression of the lower classes. By his kindly, tactful and persistent efforts he succeeded in

improving the status of both. The present Moravian bishop was off at Antigua on one of his regular tours, but his wife courteously showed us around the mission premises, including the school and the commodious, airy church, where the services are conducted in the English language. Although St. Thomas is now a Danish possession, nearly all the inhabitants, white and colored, speak English. What is the significance of this almost universal prevalence of the English tongue on these Danish islands? Does it not indicate a powerful and, perhaps, an irresistible undercurrent, which will, sooner or later, sweep them under the benign sway of the stars and stripes?

The honesty of the inhabitants, casually observed, impressed several of our fellow passengers, and we also had an instance of it. We met an old colored woman selling fruit. Espying two mangoes upon her tray, among other strange-looking fruit, we pointed to the mangoes and asked, "How much?" She replied, "Seven cents". Thereupon we took up one of the mangoes, paid her the money, and started to walk away. Instantly she called us back, and taking up the other mango, handed it to us, saying, "How could I do this?" meaning, how could she take an unfair advantage, because we were ignorant of the market price.

Morro Castle, on its lofty promontory, with the ocean waves wildly dashing into foam at the base, renders the approach to San Juan, Porto Rico, most grand and imposing. Morro Castle, like the famous Alcazar at Toledo, Spain, frowns proudly down from its massive, towering battlements upon any presumptuous intruder. Admiral Sampson, with his fleet three miles away, in vain assailed this impregnable fortress during the summer of 1898. Then he sailed away to Santiago de Cuba, where victory crowned the valiant exploits of the American navy. Today, the stars and stripes float peacefully over this grand old citadel. Our party of tourists rambled at leisure over its ramparts, through its tunneled passages, up and down its inclined walks, and peered into its dark, dismal dungeons.

After passing Morro Castle and entering the inner harbor, our hearts were further cheered by the sight of the U. S. gunboat "Bancroft" and four large, trim, steam yachts, all flying the American flag. The waters of the harbor were enlivened by numerous small native craft, rigged with the peculiar lateen

sail, whose eccentric picturesqueness so greatly enhances the intrinsic persuasive charm of the natural scenery of the Swiss lakes and the Riviera. While these swift sailboats were darting back and forth under a fresh breeze, a shaky specimen of an antediluvian ferryboat was slowly pushing its way across the same waters to the squalid town of Catano, on the opposite side.

In the evening, citizens and strangers gather en masse in the spacious plaza of San Juan to promenade or to lounge in the many rocking-chairs, ranged in two long rows, while listening to music by a native brass band—an evening scene similar to the popular concourse in the noted Piazza di San Marco in Venice.

Adams, Adams Center, Pierrepont Manor and Watertown were frequently recurring words in our conversation with Bishop Van Buren and his amiable wife, in their hired house at San Juan, Porto Rico. They seemed pleased that we had recently visited these thriving towns of Northern New York. His mother had been born in Pierrepont Manor, and his birthplace was Watertown, N. Y. He related this incident, occuring when he was a little tot in skirts, as he was traveling by rail with his mother. When the train was nearing Adams Center, the conductor shouted out the name of this thrifty village, Adams Center, which sounded to his boyish ears, "Adam sent her". In his childish innocence and eager inquisitiveness, he jumped up on his seat and, looking all around so as to see this historically interesting female, whom Adam had sent, shouted out to the amusement of the passengers and to the dismay of his mother, "Where is she"? But Eve, the mother of us all, was nowhere to be seen.

"Moltke" tourists, wearing the ship's hatband or decorative button, presented by our captain, were much in evidence in San Juan, Porto Rico, during the summerlike day of mid-winter, Jan. 15, 1903. They could be seen examining the vast castles, Morro and Christabel, which guarded opposite limits of this island city, strolling about the public squares, gathering at the postoffice, sauntering along the streets, frequenting the hotels, cafés and shops, and riding in carriages and trolley cars. Many were equipped with kodaks, which they persistently aimed at the peculiar, quaint sights in this recently acquired possession of Uncle Sam.

Out of courtesy to the large number of Americans on board the S. S. "Moltke," Gov. Hunt gave a formal reception to all the passengers and officers. The reception was held about noon in the governor's palace,—an old, commodious Spanish structure,—surrounded with spacious grounds, adorned with unfamiliar tropical trees, vines, shrubs and flowers. While Gov. Hunt, assisted by his wife and daughter, was busy welcoming his guests, a military band was playing in the garden, so that the soft strains of music were wafted through the wide-open windows and doors into the various apartments, through which the tourists were rambling. Meeting the governor in a room adjoining the reception hall, he volunteered us information concerning that small room, as well as the more spacious apartments on the farther side, which, he said, was in earlier days the official "Crown Room". In its center we noticed a large, handsome, mahogany table. Gov. Hunt is a graduate of Yale of the celebrated class of '78, being a classmate of Gov. W. H. Taft, of the Philippines, and of U. S. Consul Bowen, of Venezuela.

Oranges, cocoanuts, bananas and other tropical fruit were for sale on the streets. We bought two large, juicy, sweet oranges for one cent, and one large, fresh cocoanut for three cents. The seller of the cocoanut was provided with a large, swordlike knife, called a "machete". With this weapon, by a swift stroke, he deftly clipped off the upper section of the nut, so that we might quench our thirst with its lucid, luscious juice. Some of our passengers were persuaded to invest their loose coin in enormous, tawdry fans, on which were depicted typical Spanish scenes, especially bull fights.

Both while walking in the city and riding in the country, our attention was drawn to many schoolhouses, with scholars of both sexes, inside at work or out at play. The fine Normal School, located a short distance outside the city, was a proof of the progress, which Supt. Lindsay was making in dispelling the prevalent illiteracy of the populace before Porto Rico came under the enlightened sway of the United States. Another distinct sign of American influence was not in study, but in play. On several vacant lots, native men and boys as well as U. S. soldiers off duty were playing, not the popular Spanish "Pelota", but the American national game of baseball.

On the day of our visit, the Hall of Deputies was overcrowd-

ed with a dense crowd, eager to witness the display of oratory over certain disputed election cases. The enthusiasm of the excited auditors vented itself in loud applause, as in other lands, where popular assemblages exist.

A marble statue of Columbus in one city square and a bronze one of Ponce de Leon in another, rather abruptly carried one's thoughts back to the adventurous days of the discovery of these islands, some four centuries ago. A trim, modern trolley car brought us to a park, in the midst of an extensive cocoanut grove, bordering the ocean. The luxuriant growth of palms along the ocean-side bore a striking resemblance to a similar scene along the palm beach by Mt. Lavinia, near Colombo, Ceylon, where in November, 1899, "Tommy Atkins" was enjoying the sport of gathering and sampling fresh cocoanuts, while resting there on his way to the Boer war.

Somewhat weary with sightseeing under the hot, broiling rays of a tropical sun, we gladly sat down in the shade on a settee along the promenade, facing the ocean. Not many rods from the shore the surf, dashing high its white, foamy spray, revealed a dangerous, hidden coral reef. While we were beginning leisurely to enjoy the rich magnificence of this gorgeous scenic panorama of land, sea and sky, we chanced to look upward. To our surprise, we saw that we were directly under a huge cluster of large cocoanuts, some still green and others brown and ripe, as if ready to fall at any moment. Without much ado, we decided to shift our seats and not delay any longer, in order to ascertain whether the strong wind, which seemed to be freshening every minute, might not shake some of these down on our crania. If fruit from a high tree had to fall upon our heads, we would decidedly prefer the small, ripe cherries of the homeland to the huge, hard cocoanuts of the tropics.

Time flies! This is a trite saying, but sometimes its truth fairly startles us. Two of our passengers of the same name, "Weekes", were together pacing the deck one evening, engaged in animated conversation, perhaps trying to trace the Weekes genealogy, so as to see whether they were related. Just as these two gentlemen were promenading past us, a friend of one of the Weekes spoke out in a loud voice, so that all around could hear: "How fast time flies! Two Weekes have

just gone by." That being the case, we must hasten. As we sail rapidly by the Windward Islands, we descry on the horizon the small British Isle, Nevis, the birthplace of that industrious patriot, Alexander Hamilton, whose name honors our College on the Hill. The rapid tropical growth around him was paralleled by a corresponding precocious mental growth. At the age of twelve, young Hamilton wrote from Nevis: "I contemn the groveling condition of a clerk * * * and would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station. * * I mean to prepare the way for futurity." His preparation, including his studies at King's College, now Columbia University, N. Y., made his futurity tell for the welfare of our country. His rare genius, providentially discerned by Washington, was displayed mainly along financial lines and in the unification of our government. The realization of Hamilton's "futurity" exhibits this native son of the tropics, as the indispensable adviser of Washington.

Daybreak of the 17th of January found our mammoth steamer cruising along the coast of Martinique. Rounding a cape, there loomed up Mont Pelée, which on May 8th, 1902, had so suddenly belched its deadly volume of superheated steam, utterly destroying, in a few minutes, the gay, busy city of St. Pierre with its 30,000 inhabitants. Not far away from the scene of his late murderous rage was that dreaded monster, Mont Pelée, standing aghast and gasping for breath, while trying to hide his guilty head in dark clouds of dense smoke, as if actually ashamed of this his latest infernal outbreak, out-Heroding Herod.

Our tourists were soon scattered over this modern Pompeii, examining the ruins and searching for relics. Many wrecked shops and a bank-vault near by furnished specimens worth preserving. Some found business-letters, invoices, and new, crisp local bank-notes from an opened safe. One man, poking in the ashes, picked up a five franc silver coin, the size of a silver dollar. Others gathered silver spoons, china saucers, bowls and plates, some of which were artistically ornamented. One passenger, a physician, picked up a human skull, as one of his trophies, which he carried with him to the ship.

Most extraordinary was the clambering over the ruins and wandering through these extensive heaps of fallen buildings in the boiling rays of a fierce tropical sun. Perspiration poured

forth from every pore and rolled down the body as freely as in a Russian bath. Still the visit was unique, so that, notwithstanding the physical torture, not a single regret could be heard, except for a longer time in which to inspect these fascinating but woeful ruins. Some of us climbed up the side of a hill, picking up relics and relishing the superb view, but none of us had the time or spirit of the ardent Irishman, who wanted to climb to the top of the volcano, so that he might get near to the "dear old crater's mouth".

A handsome marble statue of the celebrated beauty, Empress Josephine, the first wife of Bonaparte, adorns the center of the park at Fort de France. The statue of the Empress Josephine, picturesquely guarded by tall, stately royal palms, recalls a most striking coincidence. Both these distinguished French subjects, Bonaparte and Josephine, were born far away on insular extremes of French rule; one lived in infancy on a French island in the Mediterranean, and the other on a French island in the Caribbean; but, amid the strange mutations of life, both united their fortunes at Paris, the very heart of France.

Our tour in the West Indies included visiting eight tropical islands, but the gem of them all was Grenada. Grenada lies at the extreme south of our route, and is farther south than Timbuctoo in Africa, Madras in India, and Manila in the Philippines. A horseback ride of seven miles to the summit of an extinct volcano afforded ever changing vistas of gorgeous natural beauty and revealed somewhat the exceeding loveliness of the landscape and, if we may be allowed a Britishism, of its seascape also. Grenada reminds one vividly of those bewitching, picturesque bits of indescribably lovely scenery, which make Japan so irresistibly charming,—"a thing of beauty and a joy forever".

A notice, which we saw as we rode along, struck us as rather odd. It read like this: "Harvest Thanksgiving in St. Peter's Church, February 5th, 1903." Just to think of it! Harvest Thanksgiving in February!

The variety and profusion of the tropical vegetation were a constant delight. We rode past the beautiful mango tree with its dark, glossy leaves, the grotesque bread-fruit, the graceful royal palm, the nutmeg and orange trees, orchids, vines, pineapples, castors, foliage and sensitive plants. It was a novel

equestrian feat to lean over our horses one side and touch with our whips these wild, sensitive plants and notice how quickly they would shrivel up, closing their delicate leaves. The cocoa tree, from whose fruit cocoa and chocolate are made, was quite a curiosity. Its fruit, the large yellow cocoa pod, was seen growing not only on the boughs, as fruit ordinarily does, but also fantastically with short stems upon the main trunks of the trees, as though some boy in fun had stuck them there, just as presents are sometimes fastened upon over-ladened Christmas trees.

The famous Bog Walk at Kingston, Jamaica, was well patronized. Our plan to spend one night at a native village was abandoned, after we had seen the untidiness of their bed-chambers and had observed the lizards darting over the bedsteads.

Never will be effaced from our memories the glorious morning, when we skirted along the wild, wooded coasts near Santiago de Cuba. The broad bosom of the ocean was perfectly smooth, excepting the rythmical swell of the sea. The sun was shining in his pristine brightness. The air was calm and balmy, when upon the fresh morning breeze were wafted the patriotic strains, "O say, can you see by the dawn's early light"! Right before us were the latest evidences of the decadent power of Spain; the "Oquendo" beached on the Cuban coast, with its hull entirely above the water line and its two gigantic smokestacks in bright yellow, as if recently painted. Further down the coast was the "Viscaya", similarly beached, but she had sunk a little deeper into the ocean and her hull and smokestacks displayed the rust of time. The Spaniards off Santiago suffered as complete a defeat, as did the Persians at Salamis, when

> "A king sat on the rocky brow,
> Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
> And ships by thousands lay below,
> And men in nations;—all were his!
> He counted them at break of day—
> And, when the sun set, where were they?"

And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of St. Vincent, with its charming botanical gardens; of quaint, mediæval Santiago de Cuba, with its decisive battle-fields of San Juan and El Caney; of Havana, with the ill-fated

"Maine" still lying a conspicuous wreck in her magnificent harbor; of the popular fan store,—the largest in the world,—and specially the cordial greeting from our old friend, Lieut. Squiers, formerly of the U. S. legation, Peking, China, and now U. S. minister to Cuba; of Barbadoes, where George Washington, accompanying his invalid elder brother, Lawrence, caught the smallpox; and of Nassau, with its fairylike submarine gardens,—seen through glass plates in the bottom of row-boats,—and its famous, elegant, colossal hotels.

These emerald isles of the Caribbean are full of suggestiveness to the lover of rural art. It was after a visit to the West Indies that the lamented Andrew H. Green, "the Father of Greater New York", returned home with new ideas about the possibilities of rural art. As stated by the trustees of the New York Public Library on the 9th inst., in a memorial on Andrew H. Green, "His activities * * were largely instrumental in securing the Niagara Reservation * * as a state park. To his intelligence and broad-minded advocacy * * is due, in a large measure, the present extensive and perfected system of public parks in New York city. In an especial degree the beautiful Central Park represents the realization of ideas long cherished by him." Perhaps after studying these beautiful tropical islands, our Rural Art Society may be enthused with such inspiration and aspiration, as will still further "better and beautify Clinton".

A Trip to Porto Rico.

ROCKING to and fro, while listening to the music of the Military Band on the popular plaza of San Juan, Porto Rico, creates quite a different sensation from "rocking in the cradle of the deep" off Hatteras.

The favorite, powerful steamship "Coamo" at the hour of high noon of Feb. 13, 1904, began plowing her way through drifting fields of broken ice, out of New York harbor upon the broad Atlantic. Steering southward, she in due time crossed the Gulf Stream, not neglecting to acknowledge the autocratic authority of headstrong Hatteras. Late on the the afternoon of the fourth day from New York, she rounded rocky, fortified Morro Castle, with the angry surf furiously dashing itself into foam at its base. Before dark, she was safely moored alongside of the newly constructed fireproof wharf at San Juan, Porto Rico.

Proceeding up from the harbor to the central public square, called "plaza", which was brilliantly lighted by electricity, we found the thoroughfare and plaza well filled with a moving populace, who had gathered there to while away a few hours in the mild, summerlike atmosphere, while a well-trained brass band discoursed excellent music, as indicated in neatly printed programs. The last selection on the program was "The Star Spangled Banner". So soon as the band began to play this national air, all promenading ceased, and the men at once respectfully took off their hats, thus exhibiting a spirit of patriotism for their native or adopted country.

The plaza seemed to be filled with the same crowd of orderly loiterers, as sauntered there a year ago, and the same occupants, rocking in the same long rows of easy willow rockers, while the same apparently endless file of promenaders were still strolling leisurely along. Some men wore straw hats and sported light canes. Some were accompanied by Porto Rican ladies, attractively attired in gowns of light fabrics and adorned with lace and articles of fancy, fluffy lightness, while their dainty white slippers were occasionally visible, as they glided

past in the ever moving cavalcade. Trolley cars, carriages, the postoffice, the public reading-rooms, shops and cafés, all seemed to be well patronized. Bulletins in English on the front wall of a newspaper office announcing latest telegrams from the seat of war in the Far East, attracted attention, until the arrival of one of our passengers, Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, whom the crowd heartily greeted with loud cheers, as if entirely unconscious that his presence among them might make them more and more discontented with their present status of freedom from the yoke of Spain, and less appreciative of their present fine educational facilities. If reports be true, ice-cream soda, coco cola, aromatic coffee, and similar mild drinks, to be obtained at Café Margarita, did not suit the taste of this labor agitator.

The famous Spanish Military Road, along which we had traveled by trolley last year to its terminus at Rio Pedras, had a peculiar fascination for us. This Military Road has been admirably constructed, so that its surface is as smooth as the drives in Central Park, New York. Engineering skill of the highest order has been employed in its construction over the central mountain ranges. It has been called the finest road in the Western Hemisphere. It certainly can vie in regard to its daring feats in engineering and its charming kaleidoscopic vistas with the carriage-road from Merced to the Yosemite Valley, Cal., with the celebrated Simplon Road over the Alps, the famous Cornice Road between Nice and Mentone along the Riviera, the magnificent coast drive from Salerno to Amalfi in Italy, or the entrancingly lovely ride over the celebrated Yagami pass in Japan.

This fine Military Road connects the capital, San Juan, on the north side of the island, with Ponce (pronounced Pon-say), its chief commercial city, eighty miles distant, on the south side. Contrary to popular opinion, this is not an old road, contemporary with the antique, massive "Casa Blanca", or "White House", constructed for Ponce de Leon, nearly four centuries ago. It is an entirely modern affair, begun by the Spaniards in 1880 and finished in 1888, just ten years before the American occupation. It is kept in excellent repair by gangs of "peons" or laborers, for whose benefit special neat buildings have been erected at intervals along the roadside. Since Porto Rico is now in the possession of the United States,

we were not surprised to find several large steam-rollers, made at Springfield, O., doing good service in keeping the road in repair.

Our carriage—an extension top surrey—was drawn by a pair of sturdy ponies of Andalusian stock, whose driver knew how to handle the ribbons in native style. Although he was the proud owner of an American watch, yet he appeared to be a lineal descendant of ancient Jehu. As is the usual experience of tourists over this road, our sympathies were wrought up and drawn out towards these agile, hardy beasts, when we saw them, dripping wet with sweat and panting for breath, as if they would drop down the next moment from sheer exhaustion, while this reckless driver, by call and whip, would still urge them on, regardless even of an up-hill pull. However, we tried to console ourselves with the reflection, that it was his interest not to harm these animals, and also they would have a good rest, so soon as a fresh relay would take their places and be urged to scamper along, up hill and down, at the same scurrying speed. The surreys,—to be found all over Porto Rico,—are sent "knock-down" from the States to the island, where they are put together. They are very light, easy-riding carriages, so that at the close of a day's journey we did not feel any more fatigued than if we had taken a ride of a few hours over an ordinary road at home.

The rich profusion of the tropical vegetation, as we sped along, was a perpetual delight. The luxuriance and brilliancy of the flowers by the homes of the natives, the prickly cacti hedges by the roadside, the tall, graceful royal palms, cocoa-palms, with clusters of huge nuts high up under their gigantic leaves, orange groves, with their golden fruit, the bright green, dense foliage of the mango trees, the glossy red leaves of the almond trees, the uncouth, jagged foliage of the bread-fruit trees, and the low growth of the coffee plantations, secluded and protected by other and more hardy trees, which would doubtless have escaped our notice had not our attention been called to them by our driver, all added variety and charm to the landscape.

Near Aibonito, located in a high plain surrounded by mountains, there were hundreds of acres of tobacco in the fields. The tobacco plant was covered with a coarse white cloth, resembling cheese-cloth. This protected the tobacco plants

from the sun and wind, producing thereby a choice brand of tobacco. These cloth screens were erected on poles high enough for a yoke of oxen to plow underneath.

Towards evening, we left the main road, forded a small river, and, after a detour of a few miles, arrived at a famous watering place, the former "Monte Carlo of the West Indies", Coamo Springs. The picturesque fascination of this charming tropical resort was enhanced by the aromatic perfumes of fragrant flowers; the discriminating aesthetic taste evidenced in embellishing this lovely rural retreat, already richly endowed by its Creator with rare pristine beauty; the invigorating hot baths, and the solitary, gigantic, grotesque ceiba tree, which Kingsley rapturously describes in his "Westward Ho!" as "the mighty ceiba tree. And what a tree that was! The hugest English oak would have seemed a stunted bush beside it. Borne up on roofs, or rather walls, of twisted board, some twelve feet high, between which the whole crew, their ammunitions and provisions, were housed roomily, rose the enormous trunk, fully forty feet in girth, towering like some tall lighthouse, smooth for a hundred feet, then crowned with boughs, each of which was a stately tree, whose topmost twigs were full two hundred and fifty feet from the ground. * * * Once in the tree, you were within a new world, suspended between heaven and earth, and, as Cary said, no wonder, if like Jack, when he climbed the magic bean-stalk, you had found a castle, a giant, and a few acres of well-stocked parks, packed away somewhere amid that labyrinth of timber."

The spacious, old-fashioned, rambling hotel was clean and the food abundant, yet the management was not up to date. One American of our party affirmed, that under the management of an enterprising American this hotel could be made a success, for the water of the springs would furnish power enough to provide electric lights for the vast establishment and also supply running water for all the rooms of the hotel.

Repairing to the capacious dining-room, an aged darkey motioned us to a seat and acted as our waiter. Since he had been brought up at St. Thomas, he spoke English. When the United States troops arrived at Coamo Springs, he had acted as interpreter. As he was afflicted with deafness, he was provided with a silver-plated ear trumpet, perforated with little holes

like a pepper-box. To a gentleman from Dunkirk, N. Y., he rattled off the chief articles of diet from the menu card, among which were roast beef, broiled chicken, calves' brains, etc., etc. The deliciously relaxing pervasiveneness of this "dolce far niente" atmosphere amid such an entrancing environment seemed to have suddenly acclimated this tourist with the pure spirit of Spanish "manana", so that not the slightest trace of hurry or strenuosity was visible in his appearance. This intelligent negro, noticing this, without much ado adjusted his ear trumpet in working order and in a sonorous, abrupt voice innocently inquired, "Do you want some brains, sir"? An audible smile played over the faces of the other guests at that table, with the result that this Dunkirk representative, somehow or other, decided at that meal not to order brains of calf, sheep or any other animal.

Before retiring, we glanced over some Spanish newspapers, deciphering telegrams announcing bitter cold blasts in New York, with the East River frozen over, blockading the ferry boats and other shipping, while here we were reveling in the balmy, mild climate and enjoying the refreshing hot baths of this famous resort. As we retired for the night, we were not shut into any stuffy bedroom. No glass-windows nor close fitting shutters excluded the pure air with its redolent fragrance. The open slats of the Venetian blinds allowed a free circulation of air from our apartments and the pure, balmy atmosphere of tropical outdoors.

After spending a few days at Ponce, beloved by Americans, we again boarded our steamers and skirted along the southern coast of the island, visiting two mammoth sugar establishments at Guanica and Aguirre, both beautifully located in landlocked harbors. Sugar cane is not planted like our Indian corn, from kernels, but like willow saplings, from slips. The two topmost joints are cut off from the stalks of the sugar cane, and these slips are planted in hills about four feet apart, so that the tips of these green stalks project a couple of inches from the ground. This planting lasts for ten or a dozen years, as these roots replant themselves by sending up retenos or shoots. However, thrifty planters attain better results by planting every five or seven years, depending upon the soil.

These large sugar companies control thousands of acres for their plantations of sugar-cane and own their own railroads,

cars, locomotives and outfit complete. As tourists, we were given gratuitous railway rides over their immense estates. Here we saw four yoke of sleek oxen pulling at one plow through the rich soil, watched the planting of the cane, noticed the native wield the sharp machete in cutting the cane and trimming off the long leaves, and observed whole carloads of cane hoisted at once, by machinery, high in the air, where it was weighed, then by titanic cranes moved over and into a large vat and then under a steam crusher, when the juice was squeezed out, like sap. After the sugar-cane had been twice subjected to pressure by powerful steel crushers, the dry and woody pulp was diverted by an ingenious mechanism to the neighborhood of the steam furnace, where it served for fuel in running the extensive machinery, and saved the expense of using wood or coal. The juice of the sugar-cane passes through various processes of boiling, until until it finally comes out as molasses or sugar The molasses is stored in colossal round iron tanks, resembling the large gas reservoirs near or in American cities. The desired quality of sugar is 96 per cent. pure, and it is packed in bags holding about 325 pounds, which are shipped by the thousands in our steamers and other vessels, chiefly to the sugar refineries of Havermeyer Bros., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Porto Rican coffee is considered by connoisseurs as among the finest in the world. The cafés of Vienna, Berlin, Milan, Paris and other European cities have long been acquainted with its fine quality and exquisite aroma. When the American palate becomes familiar with its superior flavor, there will doubtless be a great demand for this high grade of coffee in the United States. At present, however, almost the entire export crop is sent to foreign lands, where its excellent qualities are highly appreciated. Inside a large warehouse at the playa of Ponce, were stacked large piles of bags of this choice coffee, marked Trieste, Hamburg, Genoa, Havre, Rotterdam, Sundsvall, and even Havana, but a glance all around amid the mass of bags did not reveal a single bag labeled New Orleans, New York, or any other city on the American continent.

Upon our outward voyage, we had the honor to sit at the dining table by the side of a dignified, genial Bishop, but upon the return trip we found ourselves ensconced amid a most agreeable and sprightly party of five American gentlemen and

ladies, all of whom had invested in orange groves. They were very enthusiastic over orange culture and their future fortunes, accruing thereby. One gentleman of this party, who, by the way, is the president of the Citrus Fruit Co., owning large groves in Porto Rico, and whose main office is in New York, imparted much valuable information. In speaking of the fertility of the soil on his plantation near San Juan, he stated, that he had planted string beans and in two weeks they were served on his table, and he had also planted peas and cucumbers, which were served on his table in twenty or twenty-one days. In planting an orange grove, first a lemon stock of some six or eight months' growth is used, since the lemon stock has hardier roots, resisting better the attacks of insects. Upon this lemon stock is budded the orange, either the delicious sweet native variety, the Florida Indian River, the California navel, or any other desired species. After five years, these orange trees bear fruit regularly, which this Citrus Fruit Co. gather, pack, and ship to the New York market, charging only a small percentage for their labors. My room-mate, a graduate of Hamilton College on the Hill, was deeply interested in an orange orchard, which, although only of three years' growth, had begun to yield a few specimens of this luscious, golden fruit. By some stroke of good fortune, there were a number of cocoanut palms in one part of his orange grove. It chanced that while we were on the island, an enterprising Yankee from Hartford, Conn., having a scheme for dessicating cocoanuts before exportation and thereby saving freight, came along and purchased all his cocoanuts. Rumor said, that my room-mate, who formerly trudged up and down College Hill and passed his exams. as other Hamilton students do today, cleared enough off that cocoanut transaction to pay all his steamship expenses going and coming. Who now can say that a college education prevents one from making money? Since frosts are unknown in Porto Rico, the orange groves are never injured by freezing temperature, and the convalescent from northern climes need never fear a sudden cold spell, which sometimes renders a winter visit to Florida or southern California such a disappointing and cheerless experience.

A midwinter vacation to England for the same time and expense may have its attractions to some. If one's object is to continue in a strenuous life of today, let one cross the north

Atlantic in midwinter with its perilous gales, amid snow and ice. After arrival, let him spend most of his time in the stuffy, vitiated air of artificially heated hotels, museums and other buildings, or out in the chilly, smoky, slushy streets of London. Certainly there is no accounting for tastes. However, any one whose burdened spirit incessantly and relentlessly cries out within him: "Oh that I had the wings of a dove! Then would I fly away and be at rest", should take passage in the gallant steamship, "Coamo." Soon he would be carried away from the frozen north to the sunny south, where he will find most refreshing relaxation, and where cold, frost and snow are either entirely unknown or only dimly discerned as some far-off fairy tale.

"Where the long-billed pelican
Skims the sea with wary eye,
And the dawn leaps up the sky
Like the opening of a fan;
Where the fruiter's dugout slips
With strange cries among the ships,
And the spring lasts all the year,
Green leaf following the sear,
Flower and fruit together making life complete.
There I long again to be
With the palm tree over me
And the Caribbean breaking at my feet."

A Trip to Trinidad.

"TRINIDAD would be the ideal place for a winter vacation, if it were not so far from New York," said Commodore E. C. Benedict, of the American steam yacht "Virginia", to a reporter of the New York Times, as published in its issue of January 31, 1905. He had just returned from an extended cruise, during which he had visited the Bermudas, the Bahamas, and thirteen islands of the West Indies, and therefore might be considered, as competent to express such an opinion as the above.

Trinidad is a British crown-colony. This statement was made to an intelligent, traveled business man of Oneida County upon our return, when he at once replied, "That is enough! That explains fully! Order, safety and prosperity are all included." On arriving there, Com. Benedict said, "We again at once felt the genius of the English for colonial government." Venezeula—lying only a few miles distant, in chronic turmoil —is a striking contrast to Trinidad.

The world-renowned pitch lake, and Tobago, Robinson Crusoe's island, were also inducements thither, when a certain lad, with his dad, went to Trinidad.

The steady, seaworthy steamer "Maracas", of the Trinidad Shipping and Trading Co., furnished with bilge-keel and equipped with electricity, ploughed her way through the drift-ice of New York harbor out into the wide ocean. After the second day, we were pleasantly steaming away over smooth seas with milder temperature. The ship's officers were British, and the cabin boys were negroes from Barbados, while the hard working crew were all Italians. (Right here would be an opportune place to enlarge upon the transitory grandeur of nations, as one gazed upon these descendants of the mighty Romans doing the menial work upon a British ship. Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" might be quoted. Then a passing allusion might be made to Spain, to which Salisbury once applied the adjective—"decadent". Both Rome and Spain were world-powers, but in the language of

Bryon, referring to the Isles of Greece, "Where are they? And where art thou, my country?"—but I forbear.)

The fifth day out we sighted the island of Sombrero, and after that passed numerous other islands, until we entered the entrancingly picturesque harbor of St. Georges, Grenada—a miniature facsimile of Nagasaki, Japan. On the morning of the following day, the eighth day out, we passed through the "Dragon's Mouth" into the Gulf of Paria and cast anchor off the city of Port of Spain, Trinidad.

A piercing, chilly wind was blowing a perfect gale, while we were trying to take a last view of Sandy Hook, shielding ourselves from the bitter cold blasts by standing one side of the woodwork near the captain's bridge. Noticing our discomfiture, Captain Kirkby very courteously opened the door to his stateroom under the bridge and invited us inside, where through the windows we enjoyed a fine unimpeded view of the wild wintry scene. Captain Kirkby later informed me that his father, a brother, and a brother-in-law were all "sky-pilots", as he termed them, but that he was simply a "sea pilot", and he was a most able and polite one, too. The chief officer took an interest in the lad from Clinton and one clear starlit evening led us up on top of the regular pilot-house, in order to show us the standard compass, an invention of Lord Kelvin. He explained how its six parallel needles were kept from deviating by certain bar magnets, suspended at each side, and by a large one in front, so as to counteract the influence of the immense smokestack, over sixteen feet distant. He pointed out the two soft iron balls some six inches in diameter at each side of this magnet, as well as the brass railing around, which was a non-conductor, and stated that this compass cost £40, or about $200. Then he allowed us to handle the sextant in taking observations, and showed how observations were taken from the polar star, and soon calculated in the wheel-house below the exact latitude and longitude of the place, where we then were. From these two incidents, it is apparent, that the officers were not very uncivil.

Trinidad is the Spanish word for Trinity. The French still call the island in their tongue, "La Trinité," instead of the Spanish term, which the English-speaking races have adopted. Columbus discovered this island in 1498, on his third voyage, when he noticed three peaks of mountains together, and so

gave it the name. The island is some fifty-five miles long and thirty-five wide. The population of Port of Spain, its capital, is about the same as that of Utica, N. Y. This city lies south of the latitude of the northern coast of Venezuela.

Lafcadio Hearn, before visiting Japan, describes the approach to Trinidad: "Then we begin to steam along a mighty, tropical shore, before a grand, volcanic billowing of hills, all wrapped in forest from sea to sky—astounding forests, dense, impenetrable, sombre; every gap a blackness as of ink. Tremendous palms here and there overtop the denser foliage, and queer green monsters, never seen before, rise over the forest level against the azure, spreading out in immense flat crests, from which masses of creepers stream down like huge green rags. This forest-front has the solidity of a wall, the loftiness of a mountain; and forty-five miles of it undulate unbrokenly past us, rising by terraces or projecting in turrets, or shooting up into cathedral forms, or displaying extravagant mockeries of castellated architecture."

Trinidad boasts of its immunity from hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The awful catastrophe of St. Pierre, Martinique, caused some apprehension in regard to the wonderful Pitch Lake, but nothing unusual could be observed. The British flag insures security and prosperity. Port of Spain is the most attractive, cleanly and enterprising city in the West Indies. Peoples from various ends of the earth compose its cosmopolitan population, of British, Spanish, French, Canadians, Negroes, Chinese and Hindoos.

While addressing a crowded audience in the largest Wesleyan church on the island, we were surprised to notice the absence of the color line in the congregation. About seven-tenths of the people present were black or colored, while the white people were mingled, apparently indiscriminately, together in the house of the Lord. Remarking upon this fact to a Canadian visitor after the close of the service, he replied with words to this effect: "Only Christianity could produce such social equality."

Shortly after our arrival on the island, we entered one of the many large, excellent, department stores, in order to purchase a straw hat. Still wearing a Derby hat, we were taken for Spaniards, and so were accosted in that language, although English is generally spoken there. While we were there, the

British barque, Avon, from Calcutta, India, arrived, having on board six hundred and nine Hindoo coolies, who were soon to work on some of the large sugar estates. The wages of the coolies must be, according to contract, under government supervision, at least 25 cents per day, but often they receive thirty or thirty-five, and sometimes forty cents per day. After five years they may return home, or, if they decide to remain, the government will grant them a small section of land, where they may build and farm.

Before we left Trinidad, an Italian man-of-war, the "Dogali", anchored off the city. This war-vessel had steamed some two thousand five hundred miles up the Amazon, even within the boundary of Peru.

An extensive, beautiful park, called "The Queen's Park Savannah", or, simply, "The Savannah", adorns the center of this enterprising town. Fronting it are commodious hotels, the governor's house, and elegant, substantial residences. Electricity is freely employed in telephone, telegraph, lights and trolley. The trolley cars are kept neat and clean. Six tickets can be had for a quarter, or a shilling, and transfer tickets are given, as with us. The American origin of these cars is manifest by the name of "J. G. Brill & Co., Phila.", while the rheostat indicated that it was manufactured by the General Electric Co., part of whose plant is at Schenectady, N. Y.

Near the Savannah, where polo, golf, baseball, cricket and other games are played, is the celebrated Botanical Garden. Here we saw the camphor tree, whose prototype flourishes in China, cinnamon groves, like those in Ceylon, *coffea robusta* from Africa, rubber, cocoa, mahogany and other tropical trees.

Our attention was especially called to the immortelle trees, about the size of an ordinary peach tree, some of whose red petals and black seeds were still clinging to the leafless branches, while they served as supports to the useful vines of vanilla and black pepper.

Port of Spain has four English papers; two daily and two weekly.

Pure ice, made out of distilled water from which the lime has been precipitated, is sold for $5 per ton, and delivered in lots of 25 lbs., 50 lbs., or 100 lbs., to suit customers, and it is sold at retail at the rate of two pounds for one penny. In the stores, where any article is marked at 24 cents, the price is

paid in a one shilling silver coin, English currency. The prices of goods for sale are often marked in dollars and cents in American style, but American currency, except gold coin, is not current, and the articles purchased have to be paid for in pounds, shillings and pence. This strange incongruity vividly brings to mind an incident which occurred years ago in Council Bluffs, Ia. A commercial traveler was entering the hotel bus to ride to the railroad station. The day was excessively hot and sultry, so, as he was mopping the perspiration from his brow, he in a loud voice spelled out "w-a-r-m" and immediately pronounced it "hot"! Prices in dollars and cents, and payments in shillings and pence, seemed just such an anomaly. Colloquially, a shilling is known as a "bob". In bargaining for a cabman to take us with our baggage to the steamer pier, I asked him whether three shillings and sixpence would answer, when he replied, "four bobs would be all right." "Catching bobs" in Trinidad has quite a different meaning from what it has in Clinton.

A Woman's Exchange, which in late years has been so popular in most American cities, is called here the "Trinidad Home Industries Association", and is located on Frederick street, one of the most popular thoroughfares. Here afternoon tea and light refreshments are served by the ladies, and dainty articles of woman's handiwork are for sale.

For years the *corbeaux*, or buzzards, as in Charleston, S. C., have been acting as public scavengers. Lately, however, a new system of sewerage has been inaugurated, and the question of exterminating these birds of ill-omen is being discussed with animation.

Sir Walter Raleigh, in his voyages, refers to the famous Pitch Lake, which in our days has been long controlled by the American Asphalt Co. He affirms that the pitch is better than that obtained from trees, and that the supply is sufficient for the use of the whole world. This remark seems as true today, as when he uttered it. It was a genuine surprise to find that the upper, outer crust was hard enough—like ice on a pond in winter—for us to walk upon it in safety. After watching upon its surface carts and horses, and also a movable narrow-guage railway, into which the pitch was being shovelled, all fear of sinking down into abyssmal, fiery depths of the earth, was dissipated. Hot? I should say so! Our sympathies were

aroused for those early voyagers, like Columbus and Raleigh, suffering from the torrid heat, and we might well quote from the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner":

"All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun at noon
Right up above the mast did stand
No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day
We stuck—nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."

While the days are excessively hot out under the direct rays of a fierce tropical sun, the nights are deliciously balmy and refreshing, being cooled by the trade winds.

Passing through the streets of Port of Spain, a certain placard attracted our attention. It read like this:

"WANTED IMMEDIATELY.
1000 STRONG LABORERS
FOR PANAMA.
75 CENTS PER DAY AND FIND.
APPLY ETC., ETC."

Alexander Selkirk doubtless was shipwrecked on the island of Juan Fernandez in the Pacific Ocean, but DeFoe, in his immortal story, "Robinson Crusoe," the favorite with boys, certainly placed his hero on the island of Tobago, known as "Robinson Crusoe's Island". DeFoe locates it near latitude 12 degrees north, after sailing from Brazil, speaks of the mouth of the Orinoco River, and mentions the Carib tribe of Indians, from which the Caribbean Sea takes its name. For a long time he mistook Trinidad for the mainland, as Columbus, centuries earlier, mistook the mainland of South America for an island.

A visit to "Crusoe's Island" revealed the fact that tamed goats, such as Crusoe had, were still roaming on the island, cocoa palms with their nutritious fruit were still abundant, edible crabs were still crawling over the rocky shore, and, besides, as if for our special delectation, fresh footprints from bare feet were visible upon the sandy beach, like those of

Friday and other Carib savages, which so disturbed the mind of Robinson Crusoe. Through the courtesy of our estimable landlady at Trinidad, we were provided with a letter of introduction to an uncle of hers, one of the leading business men of Scarborough, the principal town on the island. Early in the evening came from him a polite invitation to come and spend the evening at his elegant, commodious residence. There in the balmy air on the veranda and in the cool parlor, the evening swiftly passed away, in conversation and in listening to excellent music, both vocal and instrumental, rendered by his finely-cultured daughters. The following morning we returned to Trinidad on the fine steamship "Severn", of the British Royal Mail Line.

Some persons are not aware how cheaply a trip to the tropics can be made. The Booth Steamship Line offers a trip of 21 days' to Barbados and back, including six days' board at the popular Marine View Hotel, for the price of $75—all included.

In its outward voyage, our steamship, "Maracas", carried southward a cargo chiefly of barrels of flour and grain. On her return from the tropics, the cargo was composed largely of cocoa beans, out of which chocolate, cocoa and broma are made, and also considerable sugar.

Snow and ice are not native products of Trinidad. As we entered New York harbor and beheld once more white streaks of snow on the bluffs of Staten Island, a lady, who was traveling en route to England with her daughter, remarked, "I have not seen snow for six years." A Scotchman, who had been in a sugar manufacturing business at Trinidad, later said, that he had not seen snow before for twenty-five years.

Now we are back again in the land of wintry snow and ice, but we are still carrying fond memories of "those blessed isles", where, Scott says:—

"The wind breathed soft as lover's sigh,
And, oft renewed, seemed oft to die,
With breathless pause between.
Oh, who with speech of war and woes
Would wish to break the soft repose
Of such enchanting scene?"

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